

Demand For Wall Along Border With Bangladesh

NEW DELHI, Oct. 30.—Assam movement leaders today demanded that a wall be built along the India-Bangladesh border in the State and that the area be manned jointly by the BSF and Assam Police to stop infiltration of foreign nationals, reports PTI.

According to the movement leaders, the official side agreed to consider the demand for a wall at the three-hour talks this evening, but rejected the idea of associating Assam Police with border protection work. Officials made it clear that manning of the border was the sole concern of the Centre.

Our Special Representative adds: As a fresh round of talks began today, the movement leaders were informed by the Government side that nearly 320,000 "foreigners" had been moved out of the State in the past two years or so. The movement leaders, it is learnt, are likely to contest this point.

They, on the contrary, asked the Government to find out how the Rs 2.14 crores a year allocated to the State under "prevention of infiltration from Pakistan" (termed as PIP funds) had been spent over the year. The contention was that the bulk of these funds had not been properly utilized.

At today's 3-hour negotiations the latest draft prepared by the All-Assam Students Union and the All-Assam Ganasangram Parishad along with the earlier draft prepared by the Government in August came up for consideration. The talks centred round the question of sealing the Assam-Bangladesh border.

The Assam leaders said AASU and the AAGSP were firmly united in their stand that foreign nationals who had entered the State must be dispersed outside and that they had never shifted grounds.

Our Special Representative In Shillong adds: The Centre may consider issuing a white paper on its discussions hitherto with the AASU and Gana Sangram Parishad leaders, it is learnt. Opposition parties in Assam have insisted on clearing the atmosphere of mutual recrimination and end the "conspiracy of silence".

The BJP leader, Mr A. B. Vajpayee, reiterated the demand at a public meeting in Gauhati a few days ago. Opposition parties have been protesting against being kept in the dark. The AASU leaders had been unusually silent over the past few months, it was alleged.

Details of the revised draft proposals were apparently "leaked" by PLP sources.

The PLP leader, Mr Nibaran Bora was reported to have told correspondents prior to his departure from Gauhati that the amendments to the Centre's latest draft proposals were "strictly in conformity with the discussions we have had so far with them". Official reaction to the Assam leaders proposals is one of surprise and disappointment, suggesting that the

peremptory tone was incompatible with the atmosphere of hope and expectation at the previous round of talks in Delhi.

According to some observers, the new proposals are a concession to the hardliners who want to revive the agitation.

Mr Girin Baruah, of the Asom Jatiyadibadi Dal, sees no point in further discussions with the Centre. His dramatic withdrawal from the Delhi-bound delegation may not be due solely on personal reasons.

The Assam movement leaders, meanwhile, denied today that there were any hardliners among them opposed to the current talks on the foreign nationals issue, adds PTI.

UNI adds: The Supreme Court has adjourned the hearing of petitions relating to the Oil and Natural Gas Commission's orders for effecting pay cut of employees who stayed away from work on account of the agitation in Assam.

The court said it would proceed further in the matter only after receipt of a report from the Chief Justice of Gauhati High Court.

31-October-1981

The Statement.